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ABSTRACT

Puerto Rico has been enmeshed in a debate over status within versus status outside the United States since 1898. The 1952 legislation that established commonwealth status for Puerto Rico created a compact between the residents of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Congress that requires the consent of both parties to any future decisions about the political organization of the island. This link makes it imperative that mainland Americans become more cognizant of the history of Puerto Rico and give more attention to the issues and ideas which emanate therefrom. This booklet is an attempt to aid in the advancement of knowledge about Puerto Rico. Four prominent Puerto Ricans have contributed the following chapters: (1) Background Notes on the U.S.-Puerto Rican Relationship (A. Carrion); (2) Statehood--A Question of Rights (L. Ferre); (3) Commonwealth: Puerto Rico's Present as a Prelude to the Future (J. Fuster); and (4) The Case for Independence (F. Martin). Each chapter presents a different stance on the question of Puerto Rico's statehood or independence. Biographical information about the authors is included. (VM)

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The Future of Puerto Rico

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The Latin American Project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Background Notes on the U.S.-Puerto Rican Relationship 5
Arturo Morales Carrión

Statehood—A Question of Rights 9
Luis A. Ferré

Commonwealth: Puerto Rico's Present as a Prelude to the Future..... 15
Jaime B. Fuster

The Case for Independence 21
Fernando Martín

INTRODUCTION

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) is pleased to present this booklet on "The Future of Puerto Rico" as the first in a series of educational publications and seminars concerning contemporary events in Latin America. The purpose of the new Latin American Project is to present the ideas and opinions of prominent Latin Americans directly to the LULAC membership and the American public through the monthly distribution of these booklets and the convening of biannual seminars. The Latin American Project has been made possible through a two-year grant by The Rockefeller Foundation.

Why should the future of Puerto Rico be an important topic to mainland Americans? First and foremost, Puerto Ricans are citizens of the United States; as such, the problems that bedevil and perplex them merit our attention. Puerto Ricans are enmeshed in a debate over autonomy, permanent union, and permanent disunion that has continued for *two centuries!* Throughout the nineteenth century, the debate in Puerto Rico concerned the island's affiliation with the government of Spain; since 1898, the debate has continued without pause over status within—or outside—the United States.

Second, any eventual change in the legal status of Puerto Rico will result from a collaborative decision between the people of Puerto Rico and the Congress of the United States. The 1966 *Report of the United States-Puerto Rico Commission on the Status of Puerto Rico* said, on page six, "that any choice among (commonwealth, statehood, or independence) is to be made by the people of Puerto Rico, and the economic, social, cultural, and security arrangements which would need to be made under each of the three status alternatives will require the mutual agreement and full cooperation of the Government of the United States." The 1952 legislation that established commonwealth status for Puerto Rico created a compact between the residents of Puerto Rico and Congress that requires the consent of both parties to any future decisions about the political organization of the island. Should any change in status be unambiguously requested by Puerto Ricans, the American people need to know the issues involved so that we may correctly orient our representatives.

Finally, as Arturo Morales Carrión pointed out in his excellent 1983 book, *Puerto Rico, A Political and Cultural History,* Puerto Rico retains,

despite North American influences, "its historical identity in the West Indies, its cultural ties with the Spanish and Spanish-American world." When we listen to the American citizens of Puerto Rico speak of the necessity of self-government, of economic growth and well-being, and of the need to maintain the cultural and linguistic vitality of the island, we hear also the voices of their neighbors in the entire Caribbean Basin. By better understanding the historic struggles of the people of Puerto Rico, we mainland Americans come to a better understanding of the people of a region that has long been a primary concern of the United States.

Few projects have had, at their initiation, more esteemed and respected contributors than the four Puerto Ricans who have donated essays to this booklet.

Arturo Morales Carrión is a historian of international renown, a prestigious educator, and a trusted and high-ranking diplomat. A close associate of Luis Muñoz Marín, the legendary founder of the *Partido Popular Democrático* (PPD) and governor of Puerto Rico from 1948 to 1964, Morales Carrión also served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs in the Kennedy Administration from 1961–1964. His introductory essay provides a necessary historical background to the partisan essays in support of statehood, commonwealth, and independence that follow.

Luis A. Ferré is, simply, a giant figure in the political, industrial, social, and artistic life of Puerto Rico in the twentieth century. As the focus of pro-statehood activities on the island for most of his adult life, founder of the *Partido Nuevo Progresista* (PNP), and the first elected pro-statehood governor of Puerto Rico, he, more than any single person, popularized the drive to make Puerto Rico the 51st state.

Jaime B. Fuster was elected Resident Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in November 1984. Commissioner Fuster, the island's sole representative in Congress and a member of the pro-commonwealth PPD, was president of Catholic University of Puerto Rico and, earlier, dean of the Law School of the University of Puerto Rico prior to his election.

Fernando Martín is currently vice-president of the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP). A professor of law at the University of Puerto Rico, he is a graduate of the Harvard Law School and of the Kennedy School of Government, from which he obtained joint degrees in Law and Public Policy.

In putting this booklet together, the staff of the Latin American Project was fortunate to have received a great deal of cooperation from many different offices. In particular, we extend our sincere thanks to Carlos Chardón, José Figueroa, Josefina González, Roberto Martinez, and Maria Rexach for the help and advice they gave us.

Background Notes on the U.S.-Puerto Rican Relationship

By Arturo Morales Carrión

In the Treaty of Paris (1898), Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States in truly nineteenth century fashion. Puerto Rico became a war indemnity demanded by the victor. To the jingoists, it was a most valuable piece of real estate that strengthened the American position in the Caribbean. As the brilliant naval strategist, Alfred T. Mahan, noted in his book, *Lessons of the War with Spain,* Puerto Rico now played the role of a Caribbean Malta, a key to U.S. dominance of the central lanes leading into the inner sea.

At that time, there was in Puerto Rico no revolution against Spain. If Cuba was up in arms, Puerto Rico was peaceful. An Autonomous Charter, granted by Spain at the end of 1897 under the threatening shadows of war, promised a new relationship, somewhat patterned after the Canadian self-government experience. Spain retained sovereign rights over the island in matters of defense and security, but a responsible government was established with an insular parliament, which was to be representative of the Puerto Rican *criollo* elite.

The short experiment in self-government was wiped out by the war. There was no disposition on the part of the United States to preserve the wide autonomy granted by Spain. General distrust prevailed regarding Puerto Rican capabilities to govern itself; the cultural heritage was considered a stumbling block. Therefore, a period of tutelage was needed, according to Secretary of War Elihu Root. Puerto Ricans were gradually to be educated in the ways of democracy through intensive Americanization in the schools and public mores; the country, in the meantime, should be run by presidential appointees. The fulcrum of power was in Washington.

Under the Treaty of Paris, it was up to Congress to define the political status of Puerto Rico. There was no room for self-determination or for popular plebiscites to determine the general will. Puerto Rico was to be run as a U.S. "possession." The U.S. not only "possessed" the land, but also the key to the political and economic future of the island. The Foraker Act (1900), which established the first civil government, created a body politic under the name of "The People of Puerto Rico" composed of citizens of Puerto Rico entitled to the protection of the United States, but with very limited rights—a real colonial anomaly. It granted a House of Delegates elected by the people, but real power lay in the presidential appointees, as represented by the Governor and an also-appointed Executive Council.

This colonial system, which juridically turned Puerto Rico into an unincorporated territory in the so-called Insular Cases (1901), did not contemplate either statehood or independence as final political solutions, and thus created much ill feelings among the island political leadership. A long, stubborn fight began for political reform and self-government, although there were at times accommodations between the island's leaders and the presidential rulers.

If politically a colonial climate prevailed, economically, the reign of King Sugar was ushered in. American corporate capital flowed into the island, modernizing the sugar industry and creating new job opportunities for tobacco growing and cigar-making. Puerto Rico became a captive market for American goods. By 1910, 85 percent of the trade was with the United States. American influence was deeply felt in the expansion of the educational system, the building of roads and bridges, and in port improvements and health services. Labor unionization and the struggle for women's rights also became evident. A Puerto Rican regiment, carefully nurtured in pro-American ideals, provided the needed security.

This system was modified shortly before the U.S. joined the First World War against Germany. American citizenship was extended, and an elective senate was provided under the Jones Act (1917). Puerto Rico continued to be exempted from federal taxation and allowed to frame its own revenue laws. But the struggle for political rights went on, as three options became apparent: statehood, independence or greater self-government in line with the autonomous tradition that had brought at last the 1897 charter. Underneath the political squabbles, lay the economic realities: sugar expansion had failed to provide an adequate living standard for the masses. By the time of the Great Depression, world economic conditions and two disastrous hurricanes worked havoc with the Puerto Rican economy. The crisis deepened in the U.S.-Puerto Rican relationship, at a time when the threat of war turned Puerto Rico into the Gibraltar of the Caribbean, a crucial defensive bulwark for U.S. security.

Profound changes took place during the war and post-war years. A dynamic movement of social and economic development came into being under the gifted leadership of Luis Muñoz Marín with support from Washington. It was basically concerned with land reform, educational expansion, health and housing improvement and government modernization. It wanted to diversify the economy by promoting industrial development through tax incentives. The movement was heavily committed to improving the lot of the Puerto Rican *jíbaro* or peasant, the backbone of the sugar peonage system. Politically, Muñoz Marín's influence loomed great. He dominated the island's politics from 1940 to 1964, when he retired from the governorship. In an assertion of political pragmatism, Muñoz had eventually discarded

independence as a solution, to which he had been originally inclined, and favored self-government under a compact with the U.S. Congress, with an island constitution drafted by the people. A mutuality of interest should characterize the relationship. These were elements incorporated in the 1950-1952 congressional legislation that led to the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (1952), based on the principles of compact and government by consent. Internally, Puerto Rico had the organization of a state of the Union, but there was a difference in its relations with the Federal Government. Puerto Rico did not participate in national elections; it was represented in the Congress by a Resident Commissioner, not by Senators and Representatives. On the other hand, it was excluded from federal internal revenue laws, achieving, therefore, a crucial fiscal autonomy which was used to underpin an industrial development program known as Operation Bootstrap.

There is no doubt, in retrospection, that the years when Muñoz governed Puerto Rico were exuberant years of dramatic social and economic changes. An agrarian economy was left behind; manufacturing now became a key to growth. Industrial expansion brought unemployment to a low of 12.4 percent in 1959.

The momentum continued in the rest of the sixties but suffered a profound shock in the seventies as a result of the international oil crisis and the backlash of the world depression. The Puerto Rican economy was also hurt by the emergence of competitive areas in the Caribbean and the Far East based on much lower wage scales. Efforts to solidify the commonwealth political relationship, through a redefinition of the compact with the U.S. Congress, failed, in spite of popular support in a 1967 plebiscite. Commonwealth was then challenged by the growth of a pro-statehood movement while the pro-independence groups, still a distant third in the electoral spectrum, were influenced by Castroism and became a very articulate minority.

The seventies, with the surge of inflation and the economic world disarray, put Commonwealth and the pro-Commonwealth supporters against the wall. The pro-statehood party captured by narrow margins the governorship in 1968-1972 and again in 1976-1984. But no irreversible tide towards statehood developed. A political stalemate prevailed instead.

If the overall economic and social élan of the Muñoz years was over, if unemployment again climbed to unacceptable and dangerous levels, industry was able to move towards high technology, educational expansion persisted and the sharp increase in federal transfer payments helped weather the storm. These transfer payments, however, particularly in the field of social welfare, created a dependence on Federal assistance, without a comprehensive plan for self-sustained economic growth. But in spite of the vulnera-

bility of its economy, Puerto Rico has continued in many areas to be ahead of its Caribbean neighbors. Trade with the U.S. market has surpassed the $5 billion mark. By 1980, politically, Commonwealth began to recoup by dominating the Commonwealth Legislative Assembly; by 1984, it also won the governorship in a hotly contended election. The voters, in the face of difficult economic and social conditions, gave it a new lease on life, while Puerto Rico remained, as in the two world wars of this century, a key strategic outpost for U.S. security in the Caribbean. This role has been enhanced as a result of Soviet penetration in the area.

A new meeting of minds between the U.S. and Puerto Rico is very much needed. There is little understanding in the United States of what Puerto Rico is all about as a distinct cultural society; the intricate web of economic relationships is little known; and there is no general awareness of the role of Puerto Rico in the complex search for social development and democratic stability in the Caribbean.

Internationally, Puerto Rico has been a bone of contention at the United Nations between the U.S. and Cuba. The Puerto Rican situation has been used to embarrass the United States vis-a-vis the Third World. But of late, less emphasis has been placed in denouncing the U.S.-Puerto Rican relationship as colonial. Countries such as Venezuela are now more inclined to view the growth of the Commonwealth relationship as a linkage between Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, while close contacts have been established by the new commonwealth government with Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, and the English-speaking Caribbean islands. Whether Puerto Rico wants it or not, its future is closely connected, not only with the United States, but with its Caribbean neighbors. Puerto Rico is essentially a land that, in spite of powerful North American influences, remains a distinctive West Indian cultural society, in its ethos, language and folk traditions.

(Arturo Morales Carrión was born in Havana, Cuba, of Puerto Rican parents, in 1913. He received his B.A. from the University of Puerto Rico in 1935, an M.A. from the University of Texas the following year, and his Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1950. From 1948 to 1953 he was the director of the Center for Puerto Rican Historical Research at the University of Puerto Rico, and from 1953 to 1961 he served the Commonwealth government of Luis Muñoz Marín as Undersecretary of State. After serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Kennedy Administration, Morales Carrión became Special Assistant to the Secretary General of the Organization of American States from 1964 to 1969. Among the many books and articles he has written are *Puerto Rico and the Non-Hispanic Caribbean* (1971), *Historia del Pueblo de Puerto Rico (Desde sus orígines hasta el Siglo XVIII)* (1968), and *Puerto Rico, A Political and Cultural History* (1983). He is currently executive director of the *Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades* in San Juan.)

Statehood—A Question of Rights

By Luis A. Ferré

The only realistic and forthright solution to the status problem of Puerto Rico is Statehood. For almost ninety years, the people of Puerto Rico have been debating the status problem. There have been honest differences of opinions as to the best and most pragmatic solution within the geopolitical and cultural constraints to which we are subjected. The debate has oscillated between independence, autonomic rule, and statehood.

But while the debate has raged in the political arena of Puerto Rico, inevitable forces in our relation with the United States have gradually pushed Puerto Rico towards Statehood. One by one, the obstacles of becoming an equal and integral part of the American Federation of States have fallen by the wayside.

First, Puerto Ricans, by act of Congress and practically unanimous acceptance, became United States citizens in 1917 under the Jones Act. This step started an irreversible march for Puerto Rico in its path to become a full and equal partner with the rest of the United States. While the debate went on in Puerto Rico as to the advantages or disadvantages of Statehood vs. the other two solutions of independence or autonomy, Puerto Ricans became permanently tied to the Nation.

A series of arguments were brought against Statehood, but the irrevocable march of progress and socio-economic integration continued to strengthen our ties with the rest of the Nation. Political forces led us to participate more and more in the political structure under which the Nation made the decisions that were vital to the life and progress of Puerto Rico.

The arguments fell down like a house of cards. The first argument was that we would never be granted United States citizenship. That argument went down in 1917, when the socio-political realities of our military involvement in the First World War made it necessary for the Nation to incorporate the people of Puerto Rico into our military effort so as to protect our democratic way of life.

The argument that because we were not a contiguous territory we would never be admitted as a State, which was used by leaders like Fernós Isern, was batted down with the admission of Alaska and Hawaii in 1959. Ironically, Fernós Isern had stated that a man would walk on the moon before Puerto Rico was granted Statehood.

The next argument was that neither the United States Congress nor the President would ever admit Puerto Rico as a State because of cultural

differences. Both Hawaii and New Mexico proved this was a non-argument. Furthermore, this reasoning has also been thrashed by the Presidential Proclamation of President Reagan in 1981 and, previously, by Presidents Eisenhower, Truman, and Nixon, each of whom made it clear that they would abide by the principle of self-determination and grant Puerto Rico Statehood or Independence, if we so desired it.

The Congress of the United States appointed the United States-Puerto Rico Status Commission of 1966, of which I was a member, and resolved that, "If the people of Puerto Rico should by a plebiscite indicate their desire for Statehood or Independence, a joint advisory group or groups would be constituted to consider appropriate transition measures," thus implicitly indicating that Congress would abide by the wishes of Puerto Rico should it vote for Statehood. On Page 13 it further confirms this implicit commitment when it says, "The key to the continuation and development of the relationship between Puerto Rico and the mainland is U.S. Citizenship. This citizenship carries with it basic personal and institutional protections which cannot be encroached upon by the Legislature of Puerto Rico or the Congress of the United States. Present constitutional doctrine," (which has been reinforced since then by Supreme Court decisions) "therefore, would not permit any action rendering ineffective the right of U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico to participate in the determination of their future, whether it will be continued and developed Commonwealth, Statehood, or Independence."

Thus, the Congress of the United States, in approving this report, has explicitly accepted the right of Puerto Rico to become a State of the Union, should it so express its desire by a plebiscite.

Furthermore, the right is inherent in our citizenship; thus, it is the right of each and every person in Puerto Rico to ask for and achieve Statehood for the Island.

The economic argument has been another one that has been blandished against Statehood, arguing that Commonwealth status has a great advantage since Puerto Rico enjoys Federal tax exemption, a powerful magnet for industrial investment. There is no denial that tax-exemption under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code's Section 936 is a great incentive to develop investment in Puerto Rico, but it is also obvious that this incentive has not been enough to solve our problem of unemployment. Unemployment has hovered around 22% for the last eight years; except once under my Administration, it has never been less than 10%.

Furthermore, the tax exemption laws, as has been proven by the present debate in Congress on 936, are a privilege and not a right; thus, they can be modified or annulled by Congress. Since Puerto Rico has no Congressional

representation, nor any Presidential voting power, its position is indeed precarious and helpless. This right to discriminate against Puerto Rico has been confirmed by the United States Supreme Court in the case of Harris vs. Rosario. (Ironically, Patricia Harris, the member of the Status Commission who was the champion of the constitutional rights of our U.S. citizenship, fought, as Secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the very principle which she had defended in the Commission.)

The truth is that as a State of the Union, Puerto Rico would be able, through its political power in Congress, to obtain legislation, which would help us solve our economic problems by developing our resources in the same manner they were in other states of the Union. Even more, this power would be translated into a significant influence in the Executive and in the regulatory commissions of the Federal government.

As Governor of Puerto Rico I was able to eliminate the discriminatory treatment Puerto Rico was receiving under some of the block grants system, which imposed a maximum or set amount independent of criteria used for other states, and was able to obtain treatment equal to that of the states in many cases, a concession which the Supreme Court revoked in the Harris case. But we have never been able to do away with the discrimination in federal measures which stimulate the economy, such as federal procurement, which are subject to political power by the states through their members of Congress.

There is no sense in continuing to go around in circles under the present colonial system of Commonwealth which has proven to be ineffective. The argument that "Commonwealth works" is a fallacy and the fact of our economic disarray is the best proof. The trouble is that the Commonwealth advocates suffer a "fetishist" fixation, because they want to adhere to political solutions of their invention; their local political support is based on conserving this status loyalty. They are willing to sacrifice progress and the welfare of Puerto Rico to maintain their ideological position. As has been said: "The ideologist will lead you to death to prove his point."

On the issue of a change in our political relation with the U.S., the Status Commission Report arrives at a realistic conclusion. It says (page 14), "Economic studies, however, indicate that sustained economic growth under the present status and a continuation of the special economic arrangements will make Statehood with adequate but not extraordinary or unprecedented provision for transition fully possible without severe risks."

On the subject of Puerto Rico's desire to become a state, the Commission goes on to say, (page 15) "The other and probably now most important requirement for Statehood is the achievement of a clear majority for Statehood. Although there are no hard and fast rules in the American experi-

ence, it is evident that Congress acts favorably on a Statehood bill only when convinced that such a clear majority of the citizens concerned seek Statehood as a goal in itself from a confident and informed desire to meet its rigorous responsibilities and enjoy its privileges...None of the many witnesses heard by the Commission was able to inform the Commission... how many people in Puerto Rico favor or oppose Statehood, as the ultimate status for Puerto Rico."

Well, this was in 1966. In 1968, I was elected Governor by the New Progressive Party, of which I was founder and which advocated Statehood, and in 1976, Romero Barceló was elected by the same statehood party with a majority in both houses of the Legislature. That means that the Statehood forces have changed from a minority position to a majority position, even though we lost the 1984 election because of a party split, brought about by personal conflicts. However, when the votes are tallied, the Statehood votes continue to grow and are undeniably in the majority. The ball is now in our park for 1988. We feel confident that having re-established unity in the New Progressive Party, the outcome of the 1988 elections will be a true expression of the Statehood majority in Puerto Rico.

Next comes the question of culture. On this point again, the Commission Report does away with all the arguments of incompatibility of our culture with that of the rest of the Nation. There is a cultural question relating to Statehood and says: "If Puerto Rico became a State it would be a case of an area possessing a homogeneous, distinctive culture being incorporated into the United States. The experience with Hawaii, although so very different in many important ways attests to the capacity of the U.S. citizens and the union of States to develop full Statehood with cultural diversity and without territorial contiguity. Statehood would necessarily involve a cultural and language accommodation to the rest of the federated States of the Union. The Commission does not see this as an insurmountable barrier, nor does this require the surrender of the Spanish language nor the abandonment of a rich cultural heritage."

This position has been reinforced since 1966 by numerous circumstances: political, constitutional, and cultural. First of all, the Supreme Court has established that languages, other than English, become languages of usage where there is a large population of different languages. Second, bilingual education is being promoted in many states, and the enormous growth in Hispanic population has made Spanish an important language on the Mainland. Furthermore, the United States recognized its multi-cultural nature, and has begun to understand the wealth which is gained by having such cultural diversity. Culture, rather than a drawback, is today considered an asset.

In the particular case of Puerto Rico, we have a rich heritage and have Spanish as our language. Both these characteristics must be protected and

enhanced. Under the Constitution, there is no limit to diversity of language or culture; there is only a limit to abuses of civil rights and discrimination. All U.S. citizens must enjoy the same political rights, irrespective of race, culture, economic status, or religion. We are a nation of equality and justice for all under the law. But at the same time, we have a right to enjoy life, freedom, and, in particular, the "pursuit of happiness." That is why the right to be ourselves, to enjoy our cultural tradition, to speak our mother language, is inviolate under the Constitution.

But we must be aware of two things: English is the usual language of communication and even though we may live in a "language enclave," it is unwise to reject the learning of English because by so doing we lose the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of progress and development which the Nation enjoys. This was the great crime committed in Puerto Rico, after 1950, when English teaching was practically eliminated from our educational system and has resulted in great suffering for those Puerto Ricans who had to migrate to the Mainland to look for jobs. Furthermore, we miss the cultural enrichment that comes with knowing another language. What we need is a sound and efficient system of education that will teach the correct use of our mother language, which is Spanish, and will also teach English adequately.

There is no incompatibility between equal political rights and cultural identity. As a matter of fact, we must try to enjoy and make our cultural identity better understood and more firmly expressed.

But we must not become the victims of cultural fetishism, the tendency to hate other cultures because they are different. Indeed, the peace of the world depends on a better understanding of all its people, from different cultures. As I expressed at the UNESCO Meeting of December 1982: "Man must be master of his culture and not its slave." Only when we realize that cultures have developed as a substitute to instincts in man, and are, therefore, of a defensive nature, will we be able to understand each other better by bypassing and eliminating what is bigoted and discriminating and enhancing those qualities which are enriching to each culture.

The great progress in science and technology that has helped man to control his physical environment and to develop methods of communications which are every day more rapid, has not yet served to achieve better understanding between man, because of the walls of prejudice that separate different cultures. The art of human understanding must supplement the science of human communication to do away with the menace of war which has been the scourge of humanity for all its history.

The great American experiment in democracy is based on this desire. It is a continuous revolution against cultural bigotry and prejudice and a consistent

effort to protect man's individual rights and guarantee his freedom and equality. It embodies the concept which I, as U.S. representative, expressed to UNESCO, when I said: "The language of freedom is neither English, nor French, nor Latin, nor Greek; the language of freedom is the language of the human heart." That is why the United States has opened its arms to the oppressed of all nations and has incorporated them into its society, which is no longer Anglo-Saxon today, but truly cosmopolitan. That is, also, why Puerto Rico can feel confident as a State of the Union, because the rights of its citizens will be guaranteed, on the same basis as those of all our fellow citizens, to enjoy the fruits of their cultural selection and enrichment.

This opportunity is further strengthened by the fact that the people of Puerto Rico are not anymore contained within the geographical boundaries of our Island. The people of Puerto Rico live throughout all the confines of the Nation, since more than 2,000,000 Puerto Ricans, about 40% of the total, live in the Mainland. There they are enjoying all the rights and blessings of Statehood and the weight of their opinion will be stronger every day in deciding the final destiny of Puerto Rico. I would say that the people of Puerto Rico, as an entity, have today their hearts in Puerto Rico but that their blood circulates through all the fifty states and is helping to mold the physiognomy and cultural characteristics of the Nation. As a result, Puerto Rico will inevitably become a State of the Union and will then participate with greater significance in the revolution for human understanding which guides the American democratic experience.

(Luis A. Ferré was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, on February 17, 1904. He received his B.Sc. and M.Sc. in mechanical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1924 and 1925, respectively. He is also an alumnus of the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. From 1940 to 1960 he was the Chief Engineer for the Puerto Rican Cement Company, Inc., in Ponce, and from 1960 to 1969 he was that company's vice-chairman. Ferré was a member of the 1951 Constitutional Convention of Puerto Rico and the following year was elected to the Puerto Rican House of Representatives from the *Partido Estadista Republicano* (PER). He was a member of the 1966 United States-Puerto Rico Commission on the Status of Puerto Rico, and in 1967 founded the pro-statehood *Partido Nuevo Progresista* (PNP). The following year Ferré was elected Governor of Puerto Rico, the first pro-statehooder to reach that position; he served one term, and left office in December of 1972. He returned to elective office as a PNP senator in 1976, and served in the Senate of Puerto Rico until 1984. Long active in the Republican Party (GOP), he has served since 1975 as the State Chairman of the Republican National Party of Puerto Rico, and is currently a member of the Presidential Task Force on Private Sector Initiative. He is widely known for his support of the arts and founded the *Museo de Arte de Ponce* in 1959.)

Commonwealth: Puerto Rico's Present as a Prelude to the Future

By Jaime B. Fuster

It is evident that there are different ways one can talk or think about the future. One can discuss ideal goals: what one would wish reality would be in the future. Or one can go beyond that realistically to explore what is most likely to happen, irrespective of one's own preferences. I am one of those who thinks that the most fruitful manner of approaching the subject is by focusing on the present as a prelude to the future. To me, any serious consideration of the future of Puerto Rico must begin by a realistic assessment of the circumstances and problems that beset us today, including the outlook of the people that make up the Puerto Rican polity. Such circumstances and problems sociologically set the framework and the limitations to future developments in Puerto Rico and, to a large extent, predetermine what will and can occur in the foreseeable future.

I begin, therefore, from the premise that the future is always a child of the present. From this basic perspective I derive a second point of view which is that none of the large-scale changes in the political *status* of Puerto Rico that some of the political figures in the island advocate have any real chance of being realized in an authentic and free manner if the Puerto Rican citizenry does not join in a common pursuit now and for the years to come to create the necessary conditions for such changes. To put it bluntly, I believe that in Puerto Rico the type of sociological infrastructure that would be necessary to accomplish large-scale changes in the near future in an authentic and free manner is absent. As long as some of the very restrictive circumstances which we experience today continue to prevail, I contend no fundamental changes in the status of Puerto Rico are likely to occur.

What are those restrictive circumstances that must be altered first as a precondition to future fundamental change? How or why do such circumstances foreclose the possibilities for change in the future?

Although I am sure there are many more circumstances of Puerto Rico's sociological and political reality that have a bearing on the possibilities for future developments, I will touch only upon three which are important and significant enough to demonstrate my hypothesis.

The Political Circumstance

The first one of the three circumstances that stand in the way of authentic change in the future has to do with what could be called the state of the polity.

It obviously refers to the political realm and the political realities which currently exist in Puerto Rico. Our polity—the political community that we know as Puerto Rico—is currently held back by several conditions that seriously restrict its capacity to tackle future developments in a genuine fashion. One of those conditions is the fact that as a people we are very divided. There is no widely-held vision about an ideal future. We share no broad, positive consensus about how things ought to change to improve our lot. This is evident in the perception many people have that there is one probable majoritarian coalition of forces in Puerto Rico against every one of the proposed options which the polity could pursue in the future. There is a majority of Puerto Ricans against statehood; there is a majority of Puerto Ricans against Commonwealth in its present form; there is a majority of Puerto Ricans against an enhanced Commonwealth; and there is a majority of Puerto Ricans against independence. To be sure, those are not the same majorities, but they are majorities nonetheless. The reality is that we do not have a groundswell of overriding support for any given alternative due to the great chasms that exist within the polity.

Moreover, it is important to note that the problem goes well beyond mere divisiveness and lack of consensus. For it is also true—and this is a secondary characteristic of our political realm—that Puerto Rican partisanship has a worrisome way of being totalitarian in outlook. Some of our political observers have referred to this phenomenon as the "tribalization" of our political process. It is not only that we are divided into "tribes" or factions but that those factions tend to be totalitarian, that is, they tend to control every aspect of our political existence. All goals and pursuits become subordinated to the requirements of the "tribe" that we belong to. There are no values that are above party or ideological dogma. If you are a member of one party you look with deep suspicion and even hostility on those who are not members. "My party is always right and it is always right on everything" goes the reasoning spawned by this tribalization. From such a vantage point, it is very difficult to find any common ground to talk about strategies that need to be shared should the people of Puerto Rico want to develop an agenda for change.

Finally, among those troubling circumstances that I am describing as characteristic of our political realm, one must note the confusion that exists among the people about the political options they have and about their viability.

In an authentically democratic system, one expects the people to know what they are voting for, what their choices are and what probabilities they have of getting their choice. This is made very difficult in Puerto Rico when

it comes to status choices since the different parties often tend to present their particular proposals as a sort of "Alice in Wonderland" solution, a panacea that will cure all of Puerto Rico's problems and create none. There is a habit of portraying the ultimate right solution and comparing it to all the others which promote alternative solutions that are dead wrong. With this type of "do or die" approach to political alternatives, confusion reigns supreme. People believe the gospel their parties advance and, as a result, the dialogue that ensues is circumscribed within the inflexibility of the party postures and the dogmatic assertions that independence, statehood or Commonwealth will solve all problems. Each option is labeled by its supporters as the solution that will lead us to paradise. Many are thus bewildered by the existence of so many conflicting "paradises."

As long as political conditions such as these prevail in Puerto Rico, we will not be in any position to authentically put in motion what is needed for a radical alteration of our political status.

We simply do not have the rationality, the civility if you will, that is needed to really try to face the future in a genuinely democratic manner.

The Economic Circumstance

But obviously the roots of the problem are not uniquely political. They are economic as well. The economic realm is the second big area which presents circumstances that condition our possibilities for the future. To begin with, Puerto Rico is facing very straightened circumstances. This is a well-known fact. Our economy is fragile and is beset by enormous problems. Among them, we are afflicted by an unemployment rate which has been hovering over 20% for many years. Although currently it has gone down to 21%, it has reached as high as 24-25% in the immediate past. We have more than half of our households receiving food checks for nutrition assistance. In spite of our great forward strides in education, our median schooling is still around the sixth or seventh grade. In essence, we face a lot of the same fundamental problems that are commonly associated with the Third World countries.

It is germane then to question whether Puerto Rico should devote itself to the overwhelming task of attempting radically to change its status, in light of these very basic problems that clamor for priority attention. We must ask ourselves, is that the best thing we can be doing for the people of Puerto Rico? Is it a legitimate first priority? Or even, can we get the people's attention long enough to get them involved in a course of action that does not lead immediately to their material well-being, something that has no immediate correlation to their welfare? Is it fair, is it realistic, is it sound? There

is a logic that indicates that the status issue should *not* be our top priority and the people of Puerto Rico, in their wisdom and common sense, so perceive it. In poll after poll they have repeated that they do not think changing the status is an urgent matter; that it should not be part of Puerto Rico's immediate agenda for the future, certainly not until such time as we solve the pressing economic problems which confront us.

The adverse economic panorama I have drawn gives rise to another related circumstance that militates against Puerto Rico becoming involved in a major revision of its status in the foreseeable future. I refer to our incredible economic dependence. Puerto Rico now receives more than $5 billion a year from the mainland by way of transfer payments under one concept or another. The island is literally sustained by a huge pipeline of Federal funds that fuel our economy. Moreover, Puerto Rico has a staggering external debt. Currently, the public and private debt is well above $17 billion. Our public debt alone—around $9 billion—is larger in absolute terms than the debt of 48 of the states of the Union. Only two of the states exceed ours. California, one of those states, has a $10 billion debt. When you consider its size and resources and compare them to Puerto Rico's you begin to get an idea of the magnitude of the problem for us to support a debt similar to California's. If Puerto Rico's situation is considered vis-a-vis Latin America, we find that the island's public debt is a whopping 62% of its gross national product, a percentage higher than that of any nation in the Western Hemisphere, including Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, and the United States.

When one reflects on the implications of this economic dependence, Puerto Rico's reliance on the Federal dole, as well as its debts to mainland investors, it is not difficult to wonder about Puerto Rico's present capacity to make genuine fundamental decisions about status. We are now caught in a web that will inevitably color any decision we make! Paraphrasing Shakespeare's famous dictum "dependents can't be choosers" comes to mind, to remind us of the great and foolish risks we run if we try to decide our future path without first overcoming the psychological, moral and political restrictions that stem from such huge dependency.

The Federal Circumstance

Finally, there is a third element that complicates matters further and which raises all kinds of questions and doubts as to our ability to tackle now the task of fundamentally revising our status. This element is the quality and tenor of our relationship with the United States. In my view, there is no sane way that Puerto Rico could undertake any change in status in the near future without having the federal government and the American people be

willing to play a harmonious and supportive role in the process. But in order for the Federal Government to play such a role in any Puerto Rican attempt to change its political status in the future, a number of circumstances in the United States would have to drastically change. In the first place, there would have to be a keen interest in the mainland about what is happening in Puerto Rico. Knowledge and understanding about Puerto Rico as well as a commitment to help Puerto Rico go through the projected changes would have to be generated. And more than interest, understanding and commitment, we would need a political mechanism that could translate those good intentions into action to make the effort more than a mere rhetorical exercise. The sad fact is that none of these conditions are present now. Benign neglect is still the most generous way to describe prevailing mainland attitudes toward Puerto Rico. A lot of misunderstanding, a lot of ignorance and very little real concern exists now. Essentially, this situation is not due to apathy but to the fact that Puerto Rico is culturally and geographically removed from the mainland and does not happen to be in the mainstream of mainland concerns. This state of affairs in the relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico would have to be altered considerably before we can begin to move toward adopting changes in our political status.

As I mentioned before, there are other circumstances in addition to the three I have described which have a bearing on this issue but I think this triad presents a strong case in terms of raising doubts as to Puerto Rico's current ability to look at our future political status with a sense that things can actually be changed or that we can achieve elusive goals that do not have a firm grounding in the present. Too many problems begging for solutions exist now and require our concentrated effort. Their solution is a precondition to change. What we need now is not merely a strategy for change. What we need is an *experience* that will prepare us for the change we may choose, a broad and encompassing experience we lack now and which I do not foresee shaping up in the immediate future. The people of Puerto Rico need to enhance their conviviality, the quality of their life and their relationship with the United States as necessary preconditions that must be met before trying to forge new paths towards the future. Without these vital changes any attempt to change our status and our future would only be a mockery. The past is prologue; the present, the prelude to the future development of Puerto Rico.

(Jaime B. Fuster was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico, on January 12, 1941. He received his B.A. from the University of Notre Dame in 1962, his J.D. from the University of Puerto Rico in 1965, and his LL.M. from the Columbia University Law School in 1966. Fuster graduated first in his class at both the University of

Puerto Rico and Columbia University. Besides serving in the academic positions mentioned in the introduction, Fuster was vice president of the Puerto Rican Bar Association from 1972–73, and was U.S. Deputy Assistant Attorney General in 1980–81. A prolific author, Fuster has written well over a dozen books and articles, the majority focusing on legal issues in both the mainland United States and Puerto Rico. As Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico in the U.S. House of Representatives, Fuster represents the 3.5 million citizens of the island; he is a member of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs and the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs.)

The Case for Independence

By Fernando Martín

Two salient facts must be established at the outset of any discussion concerning the future of Puerto Rico. Once these facts are understood, the case for the Independence of Puerto Rico will be seen not only as a powerfully compelling one, but indeed as the inevitable outcome for the future.

The first fact is that Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States. Few knowledgeable observers deny this, even amongst those who favor statehood or some form of territoriality as an option for the future. Puerto Rico is a colony in the most classic sense: it was acquired from Spain as booty of war after the Spanish-American War and it became a possession of the United States; the political rights of the Puerto Rican body politic are only those which the United States Congress has seen fit, from time to time, to concede; and the U.S. Congress reigns supreme over all aspects of our social, economic, and political life. All laws passed by the U.S. Congress (where Puerto Ricans have no voting representatives) apply to Puerto Rico unless Congress itself chooses differently, irrespective of the will of the Puerto Rican people.

All vital areas of our collective life are under the control of the United States, the list is endless; it includes citizenship, currency, trade, commerce, immigration, labor management relations, working conditions, conscription into the United States armed forces, customs, environmental matters, military bases, and foreign relations. All of these areas are administered by the United States without any participation at all on the part of Puerto Rico. These areas are not only the exclusive jurisdiction of a Congress of which Puerto Rico is not a member, but also the administration of these federal statutes is in the hands of a federal executive branch headed by a President for whom no Puerto Rican resident is allowed to vote. The interpretation of these statutes is also the exclusive province of a federal United States court that sits in Puerto Rico, separate from the local judiciary.

It is not speculative then to describe Puerto Rico as a colony, that is to say, as a territory over which another country decides all matters of social, political, and economic importance. It was once argued by apologists of the present colonial regime that this factual and objective condition of political subordination and inferiority was somehow made acceptable or legitimate because the Puerto Rican people had not voted for a different political condition. The argument was that Puerto Rico had consented to its colonial

condition. Although the argument is rarely used any more, suffice it to say that the argument of colonialism by consent, like any theory of inequality by consent, has been totally discredited by history and always been proven to be a smoke screen raised to obscure the reality of control and domination. One can hardly consent to be a slave of another; individuals cannot, and neither can nations.

Colonialism in Puerto Rico is therefore evident, its underlying factual basis is not in dispute and, independently of whether the Puerto Ricans are more or less at ease with its consequences, the reality of colonialism, of domination by the United States and subordination on the part of Puerto Rico, is an objective fact.

But the fact of colonialism is not enough by itself to signal the inevitability of independence as a solution to the problem of inequality. If political inequality in the form of colonialism were the only distinctive feature of Puerto Rico's condition then statehood could also be a plausible solution. If Puerto Ricans were Americans in the cultural sense, English-speaking and steeped in the values and mores of American culture, then the solution to our condition of political inequality as a community might lie in becoming a state and thereby participating in the formulation of the laws and policies that affect us through participation in Congress and the Presidential vote.

This leads us to the second decisive fact concerning Puerto Rico without which one cannot fully understand what lies in store: Puerto Rico is a Latin American nation. Historically, culturally, ethnically, linguistically, even geographically, Puerto Rico is part of the Latin American world. As a homogeneous community more than three million strong in an island thousands of miles away from the United States, Puerto Rico is a distinctive nation in and of itself. Even those who do not yet favor Independence conceive of Puerto Rico as a nation and Puerto Ricans as members of a separate nationality within our Latin American culture. After eighty-seven years of United States rule, Puerto Rico is as far away from the mainstream of American culture as it ever was, and all Puerto Ricans are proud of that. It is not only pride in heritage, that is to say pride in a distinct past, but also pride in a distinct and separate future as a national entity. The spiritual, linguistic, and emotional bond with Latin America, far from growing weaker, grows stronger every day at a deeper level than other more superficial political preferences or tendencies.

So strong is this cultural identity and this sense of nationhood among Puerto Ricans that if ever by political accident Puerto Rico became a state of the union it should come as no surprise if some years hence a next genera-

tion demanded independence in no uncertain terms. This is why statehood is not only not a solution for Puerto Rico but would also represent a grave threat to the very fabric of American federalism. Not only would a considerable pro-independence sector continue to thrive, as today, but it would always be, like a time bomb, threatening to reopen the debate on secession from the union that has been mercifully and wisely closed in the United States for more than one hundred years.

It is this fact of cultural and historic nationhood, coupled with the fact of colonialism, that makes Independence the inevitable solution, not only for Puerto Rico but also for the United States.

If Puerto Rico's actual status is unacceptable because it is unequal and colonial, and if statehood is unacceptable because integration into the United States is not, by definition, a solution for a Latin American nation, then only Independence can provide the rational and natural vehicle for political equality for the Puerto Rican people.

The preceeding arguments have underlined the issues of principle concerning justice and equality that underpin the case for Puerto Rico's Independence. The already persuasive case becomes an overwhelmingly compelling one, however, when the economic and social facts are taken into account.

As an integral part of the United States—be it as a colony or as a state—Puerto Rico is condemned to being an impoverished and dependent appendage of the United States. Within the U.S. economy there is no long run role for Puerto Rico to play that can save it from such a dismal future. It is destined to become a community of U.S. citizens where production and investment decline year by year and where an ever-growing percentage of the population depends on Welfare and Food Stamps, or have to emigrate to make a living productively. This is not merely a prediction, it is a description: today, close to 30% of the labor force is chronically unemployed and likely to remain so, and more than 60% of Puerto Rico's families rely on the federal Food Stamp Program.

These facts should not come as a surprise to anyone. Within the United States itself there are several zones of poverty such as the Appalachian region whose economic and geographical characteristics have made them dependent on the federal dole. This is the case of underdevelopment within a wealthy economy. Puerto Rico's case is worse than Appalachia's and with an even more dismal prospect.

If Puerto Rico is to become a healthy and balanced community from the economic and social point of view it must devise a development strategy

suited to its own needs and oriented towards growth and full employment. Paradoxically, if we continue as an appendage of the United States such a future is impossible and we would only have, as we have now, the prospect of greater and greater dependence on federal handouts; a painless death, but a frightening alternative for a proud people who should have control over their collective destiny. Only the instruments of sovereignty, only the flexibility of Independence can save Puerto Rico, economically and socially, from becoming a tropical South Bronx or a Caribbean Appalachia.

Independence is the only solution for Puerto Rico and it is also, in the long run, the only solution for the United States. The sooner this is recognized by all parties to the colonial problem, particularly in Washington, the sooner both Puerto Ricans and Americans can sit down at the negotiating table and commence the nation-building process from which will emerge the Republic of Puerto Rico.

(Fernando Martín Garcia was born in San Juan in 1947. Long active in the leadership of the *Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño* (PIP), he was that party's candidate for governor in the 1984 election. Besides being vice-president of PIP, he is the Party's Secretary of International Affairs.)

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)

When the United States annexed a third of Mexico's territory following the Mexican War, nearly 77,000 Mexicans became U.S. citizens. These new citizens were systematically discriminated against, denied voting rights, excluded from decent jobs or a good education and subjected to unprovoked physical violence. The sign, "No Mexicans Allowed" was to be found everywhere.

Hispanic Americans responded by building a strong tradition of self-determination. Service organizations were started to champion Hispanic rights and in 1929, a number of these groups met in Corpus Christi, Texas, and merged into a single self-help organization, the League of United Latin American Citizens. LULAC councils soon spread throughout Texas, into New Mexico and California, then to the Midwest, Florida, Washington, D.C., New York, Massachusetts, and Puerto Rico. LULAC's membership now includes not only Mexican Americans, but Hispanics from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and many other Latin American countries.

As LULAC grew, so did our achievements. LULAC-sponsored lawsuits resulted in landmark court decisions abolishing Hispanic school segregation and guaranteeing Hispanics the right to sit on juries. LULAC's "Little School of the 400" became the model for the enormously successful Headstart program. We have trained and found jobs for thousands of Hispanics, built housing for thousands more, provided over $2 million in scholarship aid to Hispanic students, launched programs for youth, women and the elderly, and reached out in cooperative alliance with corporate America.

No other organization can match our half-century record of service to Hispanic Americans, but too much remains to be done to rest on our history. LULAC will continue to work with our fellow Hispanic citizens until the only place to find poverty, ignorance and discrimination is in the history books.

The Latin American Project

The leadership of LULAC has long felt that Hispanic Americans can play a special and decisive role in our country's diplomatic efforts in the Western Hemisphere. The Latin American Project has been devised with the following goal: to foster greater knowledge of events in Latin America among the Hispanic population in the United States. The Project presents the ideas and opinions of prominent Latin Americans to the LULAC membership, Members of Congress, and other interested Americans through the distribution of these booklets and the convening of biannual seminars.

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